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AUTHOR Kaltsounis, Theodore
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ABSTRACT

This paper is of the opinion that multicultural education and citizenship education must resolve the tensions within as well as between them and work closer together, merge if possible, for the good of society. The paper contends this can be accomplished if both movements would commit to an overarching goal that clearly is to the benefit of all people in society. The paper addresses: (1) tensions within multicultural education; (2) tensions within citizenship education; (3) tensions between multicultural education and citizenship education; and (4) the solution: going beyond diversity to community building. Contains 13 references. (EH)

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AT A CROSSROADS: SEARCHING FOR COMMON GROUND

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Theodore Kaltsounis
Professor of Education
University of Washington

ED 391 745

During an interview that was published in *Educational Leadership* under the title "On Educating for Diversity," James Banks (1994) said this: "schools are public institutions that should promote the common good and the overarching values of the nation-state. While we (I assume the *we* stands for the multiculturalists) value diversity and are committed to that ideal," he continued, "the diversity that we value must exist within the framework of American democratic values" (p. 31). He went on to list the values of "justice, equality, and human rights.., the right to freedom of expression and freedom of choice."

Reacting quickly to this statement, one would conclude that multicultural education and citizenship education, as advocated by the National Council for the Social Studies throughout the years, have the same goals and are closely related with each other. This might be true in theory, but in practice multicultural education and citizenship education appear to be quite apart from each other. As a matter of fact, there are disturbing tensions between the two just as there are numerous tensions within each one of them.

The purpose of this paper is to argue that multicultural education and citizenship education must resolve the tensions within as well as between them and work closer together, merge if possible, for the good of society. This can be done by committing both movements to an overarching goal that clearly is to the benefit of all people in our society. I will briefly refer, first, to the tensions within multicultural education and citizenship education. Then, I will point to the tensions between the two, and conclude with a recommendation.

Tensions within multicultural education

Multicultural education can be traced, in some form, all the way back to the nineteenth century, but it emerged as a national movement following the civil rights advances of the sixties. Since that time, Banks (1993) points out, multicultural education went through a number of stages. The first stage

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consisted of **ethnic studies**, a continuation of prior efforts by African-American scholars to teach African-American children about their own history and culture. It was believed that such studies would contribute toward the empowerment and advancement of African-American children. Other minority groups of color joined the movement, including Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, and Asian-Americans. Special books and other publications emerged to promote the causes of ethnic studies. "The emphasis of many of these publications," Banks wrote, "was on ways that ethnic groups of color had been victimized by institutionalized racism and discrimination in the United States" (p. 18).

The ethnic studies movement was soon replaced by **multiethnic education**. This change constituted the second stage in the development of multicultural education. It emerged mainly because ethnic studies was proven inadequate in meeting the needs of minority students. The aim of multiethnic education was "to bring about structural and systemic changes in the total school that were designed to increase educational equity" (p. 20). The primary beneficiaries of the program, however, continued to be the children from certain minority groups that viewed themselves as victims of society. Very soon, however, **women and people with disabilities** felt victimized by society and asked to be included as additional beneficiaries of multiethnic education. This expended the role of multicultural education and caused the third stage of the movement to emerge.

Currently, we are in the midst of the fourth stage of multicultural education, the aim of which, in Banks' words, "consists of the development of theory, research, and practice that interrelate variables connected to race, class, and gender" (p. 20). The educational enterprise in general is viewed as a system with several dimensions which need to be influenced and modified, if multicultural education is to be effective.

My purpose here is not to explore in detail the various stages of multicultural education, but to simply point out that the movement has gone through a process of development, and to argue that it is an evolving phenomenon. In my view, this process has not yet been completed. There is still room for further development, but I will return to that later. At this point I would like to suggest that each of the various stages was replaced by another one because of the pressures brought upon by the numerous tensions each one of them contained or generated. Such tensions still exist, probably

more so than any other time before, and demand that multicultural education move on to another stage. But what are today's tensions within multicultural education?

Discussions on the current tensions within multicultural education are in abundance in today's educational as well as popular literature. A review of two respectable sources (Gay, 1994; and Sleeter, 1995) reveal that the current tensions come mainly from two directions: from those who define multicultural education narrowly in order to promote what appear to be self-serving objectives of a political nature, and from those who feel multicultural education is a threat to the unity of this society. The first group is labeled as the *radical left* while all those in the second group are lumped under the *conservative* label.

The advocates in the radical left are primarily concerned with systems of oppression, mainly White racism and capitalism. As Gay points out, "They believe multicultural education does not deal aggressively enough with race, class, and gender oppression, political and economic inequities, and the institutional structures of society... Radical critics," Gay continues, "decry as simplistic and naive the assumption that teaching children of color about their cultural heritage will improve their academic achievement and ultimately lead to better employment. To them these emphases are 'trivial pursuits' that ignore the more important issues of power, poverty, and racism in education and their pervasive negative influences for ethnic minorities" (p. 38). It is mainly the radical left that is responsible for the various Afrocentric school curricula that have been met with so much controversy in school districts throughout the country. In view of the situation, it is natural for mainstream multiculturalists to ask: with friends like those in the radical left, who needs enemies?

Multicultural education has been and continues to be a much needed movement with noble objectives. It does not deserve the attacks from the radical left. But the radical left did not only damage multicultural education with these direct attacks, it also damaged it indirectly by giving rise to the conservative critics of the movement. Unfortunately, the conservatives almost totally ignore the mainstream multiculturalists. When they criticize multicultural education, they usually have in mind the most visible Afrocentric curricula like those of New York and Portland, Oregon, which have been criticized for both Afrocentric influence and weak scholarship. The

conservatives are suspicious of the origins of multicultural education and they consider it to be divisive. "First," Sleeter writes, "the conservative critics regard many of the changes taking place in education as the politically charged extremist work of a fringe of loony radicals who are succeeding in foisting new policies on a public they do not represent... Second," Sleeter continues, "conservatives are concerned that excessive emphasis on race and ethnicity is divisive, and will tear the United States apart in a manner similar to that experienced by the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia" (p. 83).

Again, the purpose of this paper is not to analyze or to evaluate the various positions in or toward multicultural education, but to emphasize the conflicts they generate, and to point out the tensions they cause within the movement. As Sleeter concludes, "fear of radicalism in the United States, coupled with conservative criticisms, is making it increasingly difficult to address inequality directly" (p. 92). What, then, is the solution? It would have been easy to answer this question if the history of citizenship education in this country was more inspiring and reassuring, or, at least, if the profession today had a better consensus on a definition of citizenship education in a democratic society. Unfortunately, questionable citizenship education practices prevailed in the past, and the current definition of citizenship education is confusing, to say the least. As there are tensions within multicultural education, there are numerous tensions within the movement of citizenship education.

Tensions within citizenship education

Walter Parker addressed during this session three tensions within the concept of democracy, which, in turn, cause tensions within citizenship education . The first one is the tension between direct involvement in public life and spectatorship. A great number of people in our society see their role as citizens only in terms of electing politicians. Following the elections, they drift to the role of spectator and expect every ill in society, including inequality, to be taken care of by the politicians or someone else. That is not enough. If a viable democracy is to be maintained, all citizens need to be aware of the problems confronting society and be constantly monitoring the work of their elected officials toward the solution of these problems.

The second tension identified by Professor Parker is the tension between viewing democracy as an attainment needing only protection, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, as a way of life that a people try to undertake together. The first notion tends to view democracy as a finished product, something that is very discomforting to those in the margins of society. The second notion views democracy as an ongoing process, something that inspires hope to those who have not yet found their rightful place within the social context. The first notion gives rise to concepts of citizenship that allow individuals to believe in the slogan "my country, good or bad," while the second notion implies the ongoing participation of each and every citizen. The first notion accepts societal conditions as they are and demands loyalty and pride on the part of citizens, while the second notion demands that citizens evaluate conditions in society and raise questions about them.

The third tension is the one caused by the conflict between pluralism and assimilation. A democracy has been defined as a union of unions -- smaller unions of all sorts, that is (Dewy, Rawls). There are those who believe that smaller unions should be encouraged and nurtured, but there are also those who believe that the larger union is more important and that the smaller unions should simply be tolerated. A large part of the American people are concerned that the emphasis on diversity will lead the United States to the same problems Canada is facing with its French speaking population.

As a result of the tensions presented, those involved in citizenship education appear to be confused and divided. Theoreticians believe and teach one thing about citizenship education, while practitioners believe and practice something else, quite often the opposite. Theoreticians emphasize the analytical and critical abilities of the citizen, while practitioners promote loyalty and obedience to the country as it is. As Ferguson (1991) concluded, "Teachers are inclined to socialize students toward passive, conventional forms of civic action and to avoid discussion of the more personally responsible, active modes of participation" (p. 392).

In addition, Marker and Melinger (1992) argue that the term citizenship education is so broad that it can claim the entire school program as its domain. As demonstrated during the last twenty to thirty years, others view citizenship education in too narrow terms and limit the scope of the program on teaching singular themes, such as law and the environment, or on

developing an important single ability, such as decision making, critical thinking, values clarification, or conflict resolution. As I argued elsewhere (Kaltsounis, 1994), no serious effort has been made, unfortunately, to clearly tie citizenship education to the fundamental meanings and processes inherent in the concept of democracy.

Tensions between multicultural education and citizenship education

As alluded to in the beginning of this paper, there is common ground between multicultural education and citizenship education, but this reality is often obscured because of the tensions that exist within each one of these movements. Multiculturalists, whose primary objective is to fight oppression, prejudice, and discrimination in everyday life, find it difficult to trust citizenship education when it is often identified, in practice at least, with the acceptance of current social conditions and all of the injustices that characterize today's society. This becomes even more difficult when one is reminded of the historical role of citizenship education, which was to assimilate those who were different into the ways of the dominant majority.

On the other side are those who are concerned about an overemphasis on the differences among us at the expense of what unites us. As a recent Gallup Poll (Elam, et al,1994) showed, the American people are in favor, by about three to one, of studying the differences, but more than fifty percent of the same sample indicated that they would like to balance this study of differences with the study of one common cultural tradition. (p. 53) This concern becomes even more intense when the study of the differences is limited to a small number of groups, the ones often referred to as the visible minorities. After a very hot debate recently, the faculty at the University of Washington rejected a proposed multicultural education requirement because it was limited to the visible minorities.

Then, there is Afrocentrism, a movement that attracted a lot of attention, most of it unfavorable, and managed, by association, to discredit multicultural education. They defy rationalist traditions in favor of self-serving purposes. One of their claims, for example, is that the Greeks have stolen everything they created from Egypt -- therefore, the Blacks. In putting forth their claim, however, the Afrocentrists "appeal to emotions," a historian points out (Lefkowitz, 1992), "and deny opportunity for debate. In doing so," the same historian continued, "they are abandoning the very heritage that

they insist was stolen from their ancestors by the Greeks" (p. A52). Putting it simply, Afrocentrists are political, and they advocate narrow points of view.

Afrocentrism was developed to counteract Eurocentrism, but it is just as self-centered, and biased. Most Americans consider Afrocentrism an extremist movement. Even some Blacks find the Afrocentrists to be moving in the wrong direction. The harshest critic is probably a Black syndicated columnist (Sowell, 1995) who wrote this about them: "They are creating a phony history and phony traditions as escapes from very real problems of drugs, violence, and social degeneration in the ghettos of the 90s. Worse, they are turning young black's attention backward toward slavery instead of forward toward the opportunities and demands of the high-tech world of the 21st century" (p. B5). This criticism is so harsh that I hesitated using it, but it points to a significant source of tension between multicultural education and citizenship education, and provides a strong argument against multiculturalism for those who chose not to make the distinction between Afrocentrism and mainstream multicultralism.

The solution: going beyond diversity to community building

What, then, is the solution? How can multiculturalism become an indisputable movement toward equity and empowerment for all people? In my view, this can be done through a number of adjustments in the movement. First, multicultural education needs to go beyond diversity. There is no question that diversity is a fundamental element in a democracy. Strictly speaking, there would be no need to invent democracy and the democratic process if there was no diversity. But diversity in a democratic society is not an end. It is a condition, a point from which the society begins in order to achieve a social order within which everyone feels comfortable and is able to pursue happiness. In the final analysis, diversity is there, and one can easily argue that it has always been evident. The various minority groups were probably aware of diversity, throughout the years, more than any other group. That is not what they were missing. What they were missing was what it takes to be able to go beyond diversity. In a sense, diversity within a democracy as an educational goal is a short-sighted objective. People in this world need more than knowing that they are different in order to be able to succeed.

At the same time, multicultural education and mainstream multiculturalists must clearly disassociate themselves from those who blame all minority problems on White racism. The question is not who to blame, but how to get along with each other and be able to move forward. White racism has been and still is a factor, but the problems faced by minorities today might not necessarily all be the result of racism. Arch Puddington (1994/95), a former aid to a late civil rights leader, argues, for example, that the problem with the Blacks in urban neighborhoods is not White racism but the lack of appropriate initiatives related to building a healthy economic base. Racial peace, he claims, cannot be achieved with "ambitious demands for racially balanced juries, police forces, and legislative bodies, along with renewed calls for multicultural education and an Afrocentric curriculum in urban schools." (p. 176). Such demands, he continues to argue, "serve to reinforce the dangerous myth that the road to black economic integration will be significantly different from the road taken by all other groups" (p. 177).

In addition, it is time for multiculturalists to embrace everyone in society rather than just those who feel victimized. It is difficult today to tell who is a victim and who is not.

If multicultural education is to move beyond diversity, it needs to identify for itself a new focus, one that could prove to be more dynamic than diversity in empowering individuals. I propose community building as that focus. By community I mean a geographical place (small or large) where people with all sorts of differences live together in harmony. They all respect each other and work together to find solutions to common problems. In the process of resolving these problems, they look to see what each can contribute, based on their individual resources, in order to find solutions. The actions are not based on bitterness, but on common sense and optimism. As Puddington observed, such an approach was exhibited by a number of Black local leaders in the Los Angeles area following the 1992 riots. "Where national black leaders," he wrote, "harp on the theme of white racism and call for urban Marshall Plans, many local leaders insist that measures be taken to ensure a level playing field for black businessmen and drive home the point that the solutions to the problems of black America will ultimately be found in the inner resources of black people themselves" (p. 177).

Twenty or twenty-five years ago, it was necessary for multicultural education to stress diversity in order to assist neglected groups to achieve

recognition in society. That has been accomplished to the point where it appears to be counterproductive to continue stressing diversity. It is time now for multicultural education to move forward to the next stage, the fifth stage, if you will, by establishing as its focus the goal of community building. This is a goal that is also advocated by a more up-to-date notion of citizenship education. This latest notion derives its essence directly from the concept of democracy. That is why it is appropriately referred to, not just as citizenship education, but as democratic citizenship education. Beginning with a recognition of diversity among people, democratic citizenship education goes on to stress dialogue, compromise, and adjustment to new situations arrived at through compromises. The ultimate objective of democratic citizenship education is not just an awareness of and the involvement of individuals in the political manifestations of democracy, but the way people create and live in just communities.

Obviously, there is common ground between a truly democratic citizenship education and mainstream multicultural education. The objectives of a multicultural education, freed from narrow political biases, are quite similar with those of democratic citizenship education. In view of this similarity, why not merge the two within the context of a fresh target, that of community building? By doing so, we can by pass the criticisms labeled against multicultural education and still continue to work toward the achievement of its most meaningful objective -- the empowerment of all the people.

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